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# Work Characteristics and Family Routines in Low-Wage Families

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*The maintenance of routines is linked to positive outcomes in children and families. Role theory asserts that resources and constraints found in family and work environments will shape a parent's ability to successfully fulfill both roles. To date, there is scant research examining the maintenance of routines in low-income families whose work environments are often characterized by temporary work, non-traditional shifts, and irregular hours. This study seeks to understand the relationship between employment characteristics on the maintenance of family routines in a sample of low-wage families. The results of this study support the findings of other researchers that low-wage families face considerable work-family strain due to their jobs, but they succeed in maintaining routines despite adverse working conditions.*

*Key words: work, family routine, low-wage families, role strain*

Routines are regularly performed activities that comprise the "familiar chains of events that make up people's days and weeks" (Lowe, Weisner, & Huston, 2005). For families, these routines include eating meals together, watching TV, doing homework, completing household tasks and chores, going to church, and going to sleep (Huston, 2002; Johnson & Gais, 2001). Maintaining consistent routines in families is associated with positive family outcomes, including increased feelings of parental competence and parent-child harmony (Brody & Flor, 1997). Children in families that have regular routines have been found to have better physical health (Fiese et al., 2000). *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, September 2010, Volume XXXVII, Number 3

2002), higher social competence (Keltner, 1990), a lower likelihood of using illegal drugs (National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, 2007), and better overall well-being (Chase-Lansdale & Pittman, 2002). When former President Bill Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 into law, he stated that one way that working would benefit the families of welfare recipients is by encouraging them to establish and maintain family routines. In his words, "Work organizes life. It gives meaning and self-esteem to people who are parents. It gives a role model to children" (DeParle, 2005, p. 265).

Despite the importance of the maintenance of routines on children in families, there is little research examining the ways in which employment affects the ability of families to maintain routines, especially the low-income families targeted by welfare reform (Chase-Lansdale & Pittman, 2002; Crouter & McHale, 2003). This dearth of research is surprising given the fact that many aspects of the low-wage labor market may make it harder to maintain routines, including the prevalence of nontraditional work hours and job instability (Handler & Hasenfeld, 2007). In this paper, I seek to address this gap by examining the relationship between employment characteristics and the maintenance of routines in a sample of low-income working families.

## Background

### *Role Theory*

When parents work, they occupy multiple roles, including those of parent, employee, and spouse. Researchers studying the association between work and family seek to understand how these multiple roles affect both parent well-being and the quality of their family relationships (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, & Crouter, 2000). This literature has yielded two different perspectives: role enhancement and role strain.

Advocates of the role enhancement perspective suggest that individuals participating in multiple roles have greater access to resources and opportunities, which they can use to promote growth and better functioning across all roles (Barnett, 1998; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Voydanoff, 2002). These resources and opportunities include "monetary income,

heightened self esteem, the power to delegate onerous role obligations, opportunities for social relationships, and challenge" (Barnett, 1999, p. 152). By contrast, adherents to the theory of role strain observe that each role that a person occupies comes with its own obligations and demands. These demands, and the actions that workers take to fulfill them, may not be harmonious. Workers may fail to meet their competing demands because they have limited time, energy and resources. This struggle creates a feeling of role strain (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Role strain may be exacerbated when the constraints imposed by adopting an additional role outweigh the benefits that it provides and when the parent feels "locked in" to a role that produces conflict (Barnett, 1998). Role strain may especially be a problem for low-wage workers who face an occupational environment that may yield fewer benefits and more constraints than that of higher income families. For example, low-wage occupations are associated with either longer work hours (Dunifon, Kalil, & Bajracharya, 2005) or too few work hours (Barnett, 1998) and higher job instability than higher wage occupations (Dodson & Bravo, 2005; Kaye & Nightingale, 2000). Furthermore, low-wage mothers are more likely than higher-wage mothers to work nonstandard shifts, including evening, night, and weekend hours. This makes the coordination of childcare and other activities more difficult (Presser & Cox, 1997). Overall, low-wage workers' occupational environment may leave their families less able to maintain routines compared with higher income families (Brody & Flor, 1997; Chase-Lansdale & Pittman, 2002; Huston, 2002). While most research focuses on the impact of role strain on family life, the theory itself also asserts that strain may negatively impact parents' employment.

#### *Work Characteristics*

Researchers have measured how workers' ability to maintain family routines is affected by four kinds of work characteristics: wages; the number of work hours; the timing of work hours; and job stability. According to role enhancement theory, wages should be positively related to the maintenance of routines in families since caregivers can use additional income to purchase goods and services that will help them maintain

routines. Brody and Flor (1997) assess the relationship between wages and routines in a sample of rural, single-parent, African American families. To measure routines, they compile a 14-point scale based on the frequency with which caregivers perform various activities with their children, including doing homework, playing, and eating. The authors determine that increased wages stimulate an increase in maternal self-esteem, which is positively related to the maintenance of family routines.

The number of work hours may also be an important determinant of routines in low-wage families (Phillips, 2002; Presser & Cox, 1997). More work hours can be a resource for caregivers, since they lead to higher income, which is positively associated with consistent routines. However, working either too few or too many hours may hinder a working parent's ability to carry out routines (Crouter & McHale, 2003). A longitudinal study of low-wage workers in the late 1990s found that most low-wage workers did not work full-time. About 66 percent of low-wage female workers in their sample had a full-time job, compared to 78 percent of all employed females (Schochet & Rangarajan, 2004). Part-time workers may have more time, but not enough financial resources to promote routines in their families. Alternately, parents may have to take up multiple part-time jobs in order to meet their families' financial needs, which would make them less available to sustain family routines (Barnett, 1998).

Working long hours may also lead to parents having less time to devote to their families. In London, Scott, Edin, & Hunter's (2004) ethnography of former welfare recipients transitioning to work, participants state that they constantly struggle to fulfill their familial obligations while working. In another study, Phillips (2002) examines the association between parents' level of work and the maintenance of a reading routine among a nationally representative sample of low-income families. For children under the age of six, she tests if parents' level of work is related to reading to their child at least 6 days per week. Her results reveal that fully-employed ( $\geq 35$  hours per week), low-income single parents are less likely to have a reading routine with their child under six years old than low-income single parents who work only part-time ( $\leq 34$  hours per week) after

adjusting for a variety of work, caregiver, and child characteristics. However, work hours were not a significant determinant of a reading routine in low-income households with married parents. This study suggests that after adjusting for wages, single-mothers who work less are better able to sustain routines than single-mothers working full-time.

The timing of work hours may also help or hinder a working parent's ability to sustain routines (Crouter & McHale, 2003). Employed mothers with limited education are more likely to work evenings, nights, and weekends. As compared with women with greater levels of education, they are also more likely to have nonfixed work schedules (Presser & Cox, 1997). Working parents may adjust to working nontraditional hours by relying on spouses or other kin to maintain routines or by adjusting their routines around their work schedule (Roy, Tubbs, & Burton, 2004).

Researchers believe that job stability may also affect family routines. In general, low-wage workers have shorter job tenure than higher-wage workers. In one study, about 35 percent of low-wage workers had started their jobs within the previous year, compared to 20 percent of all workers (Schochet & Rangarajan, 2004). In their study, Roy et al. (2004) observe that job instability is one reason that poor mothers struggle to sustain consistent family routines. These mothers state that they are often "the last hired, first fired" in their jobs (p. 173). The process of finding and adjusting to new jobs alters routines in these families.

### The Importance of Sustaining Routines in Low-Income Families

The studies above reveal that the jobs obtained by low-wage parents pose many significant barriers to maintaining routines. However, there are also a handful of qualitative studies that follow low-wage parents over time in order to understand the ways in which they maintain balance between their work and family lives (London, et al., 2004; Roy et al., 2004; Seefeldt, 2008; Tubbs, Roy, & Burton, 2005). The mothers in these studies often state that it is hard for them to simultaneously be a good mother and work a full-time job.

Women transitioning from welfare to work in one study report that working has offered them many benefits, but they struggle to find the time and energy to be with their children (London et al., 2004). To decrease feelings of strain, several studies find that mothers do not change the time that they spend with their children. Instead, mothers forgo job advancement opportunities that may interfere with their family time even if taking the job would lead to higher wages (Seefeldt, 2008, p. 14). Other studies find that mothers adjust to nontraditional hours by setting a fixed routine for their families, while completing chores and other activities at night after children are asleep. This allows them to work and maintain routines, but also leads to their feeling overwhelmed and exhausted (Roy et al., 2004; Tubbs, Roy, & Burton, 2005). These qualitative studies suggest that adverse working conditions may have detrimental effects on low-income families, but that parents act to protect the time that they spend with their children.

Based on the literature review, work conditions can affect the way parents balance their work and family roles in different ways. Role strain theory leads to the expectation that families will have a harder time maintaining routines when faced with jobs characterized by low wages, long hours, non-traditional work hours, and instability. This may reduce their ability to maintain routines in their families. However, ethnographic research of low-wage families finds that these employment characteristics lead to feelings of role strain among working caregivers, but they sacrifice their personal health and time to ensure that they have sufficient time with their families.

While previous studies start to uncover the determinants of sustaining routines in low-wage families, they have several limitations. First, researchers operationalize the notion of maintained routines differently. For example, Brody and Flor (1997) construct a scale based on 14 activities, while Phillips (2002) counted reading as a routine if it occurred at least 6 days per week. Second, prior research has examined the relationship between work and family routines primarily using samples of current or former welfare recipients (e.g. London et al., 2004; Seefeldt, 2008). However, using prior welfare recipients as a sampling frame may yield inaccurate findings of low-wage workers in general. This may be especially true for growing

numbers of low-wage earning immigrants (Borjas, 2006), whose ability to access welfare was dramatically reduced with the passage of welfare reform in 1996 (Lofstrom & Bean, 2002). As the size of the welfare population decreases, "it becomes increasingly important to shift some of the research focus away from studies of welfare leavers and onto studies of the larger population of low-income families" (Phillips, 2002, p. 1). Third, the samples of previous studies are also limited by the fact that they are mostly composed of white or African American families (e.g. Brody & Flor, 1997; Roy et al., 2004; Tubbs et al., 2005). This may be problematic since researchers find that family characteristics, including race/ethnicity, are also important determinants of caregivers' ability to maintain routines (Flores, Tomany-Korman, & Olson, 2005; Phillips, 2002; Weisner, Matheson, Coots, & Bernheimer, 2005).

## Methods

### *Sampling Method*

The present study seeks to address these limitations using data from the Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey (L.A.FANS), which is funded by a grant R01 HD35944 from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development to RAND in Santa Monica, California. L.A.FANS is a survey conducted in 2002 in order to assess the lives of families living in both high- and low-income neighborhoods in Los Angeles. L.A.FANS is the ideal data source for this study because it allows for the examination of low-income working families that have not been on welfare and of Latino families.

L.A.FANS employed a multistage sampling design in order to examine the effects of neighborhoods on families and children. In the first stage, census tracts were chosen in a stratified random sample based on the percent of the census tract living below the federal poverty line. A total of 65 census tracts were selected for the study, with an over-sample of poor neighborhoods. Second, researchers randomly selected households within each census tract, with an over-sample of households with children under 18 years old. An average of 41 households were selected and interviewed in each neighborhood in the first wave of data collection, which occurred from 2000 to 2001.



After collecting a complete list of all adults and children living in the household, researchers randomly selected an adult to interview. If there was a child under the age of 18 in the household, researchers also interviewed the primary caregiver of the child, a randomly selected child (if at least nine years old), and in some instances, the sibling of the randomly selected child. Further information on L.A.FANS can be found at: <http://www.lasurvey.rand.org>.

To ensure that I was analyzing the employment characteristics of the caregiver, not those of another adult living in the household, my study considers only households in which the randomly selected adult was also the primary caregiver. Among these respondents, 91 percent completed the primary caregiver and parent questionnaires and 89 percent completed the household questionnaire (Peterson et al., 2004).

The sample for the current study consists of 235 low-wage households with children under the age of 17 with complete data for variables used in the analysis. I define a low-wage worker using a living wage ordinance passed by Los Angeles County in 1999. This ordinance sets wage requirements for specified contractors, requiring that employees must earn at least \$8.36 per hour with health benefits, or \$9.46 per hour without health benefits. Respondents who earned less than these requirements are considered low-wage workers. I choose this measure of poverty because it adjusts for: (a) health care costs, which are a primary expense for families (Wertheimer, Long, & Jager, 2002); and (b) regional specific costs of living, such as housing and childcare (Lichter & Jayakody, 2002).

### *Measures*

*Maintained routines.* A maintained family routine is defined as an activity done at the same time per day at least five times per week. I created 4 dichotomous variables based on the number of times a week the primary caregiver reports that the family: (1) ate breakfast; (2) completed chores; (3) ate dinner; and (4) went to bed at the same time of day. Research demonstrates that routines only have positive effects on children if they are performed in a consistent and predictable way (Weisner, 1998). Therefore, it is not the number of times per week a family does an activity together that yields positive effects, but that they

carry out this activity multiple times per week at the same time. For this reason, a dichotomous variable is better grounded in theory than a continuous variable. I choose the cutoff of at least five time per week based on the ethnography conducted by Roy et al. (2004) in which families' time was structured by the traditional 9-to-5 Monday through Friday work schedule, regardless of when they worked. I considered combining the four routines into one scale of the number of maintained routines. However, the routines are not highly correlated with one another (analysis available upon request).

*Work characteristics.* I include four work characteristics in my specification: wages, weekly hours worked, job stability, and working multiple jobs. First, I construct the wage variable in this analysis by combining responses from two items. In the survey, respondents are asked how much they earned at their last job. Respondents could give their hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, or annual wage. To calculate an hourly wage for respondents, data are first recoded into weekly wages: daily wages are multiplied by 5; monthly wages are divided by 4; and yearly wages are divided by 52. These calculations assume that respondents worked 52 weeks a year, five days a week, and 8 hours per day. To compute an hourly wage, weekly wages were divided by the average number of hours worked per week. The second work characteristic, hours worked per week, was reported by the primary caregiver in the survey. Job stability is operationalized as the number of days the caregiver worked at her current job. Caregivers in the study also reported the number of jobs they currently have. Since only 27.4% of caregivers have more than one current job, I dichotomize this variable such that the respondent either works one job or more than one job.

*Control variables.* I include two sets of control variables in the analysis: family characteristics and caregiver characteristics. The family control variables included in the analysis are: marital status, number of children in the household, and the race/ethnicity of the caregiver and family. Marital status is included as a control variable in the analysis, since research suggests that two adults in the household can make it easier to maintain routines (Weisner, 1998). I code marital status into two categories: married and single-parent

households (neither married nor living with partner). Cohabiting couples (38 cases) are excluded from the analysis, since there is not enough research showing how caregiving responsibilities would be shared in these households (Phillips, 2002). I use single-parent households as the reference group in this analysis. I also control for the number of children currently living in the household, because having more children in the household can increase the conflict around a routine, making it harder to maintain (Lowe et al., 2005). The primary caregiver in the survey reports the number of children in the household. The analysis also controls for family race/ethnicity since some research shows that African American and Latino families are less likely to maintain routines than white families (Flores et al., 2005; Phillips, 2002). Race/ethnicity is considered a family characteristic in this analysis, since caregiver and child race/ethnicity are highly correlated. Given the limited number of white (22 respondents), African American (23 respondents), Asian Pacific Islander (2 respondents), Native American (1 respondent) and multiethnic (4 respondents) respondents, I collapse race/ethnicity into two categories: Latino and non-Latino. Non-Latino caregivers are the reference group in the analysis.

Maternal age and maternal education are the caregiver control variables in this analysis. I use 'maternal' interchangeably with 'caregiver' throughout the rest of the paper since 99.2% of caregivers are women in this sample. Their relationship to the maintenance of family routines has not been examined, but research establishes them as predictors of parenting behavior generally (Chase-Lansdale & Pittman, 2002; Dunifon, Kalil, & Danziger, 2003; Jackson, Brooks-Gunn, Huang, & Glassman, 2000). Maternal age is the respondent's age in years. Maternal education is measured as the highest year of school completed.

## Findings

L.A.FANS developed case weights that are used in this analysis to correct for the multistage sampling design and for household non-response. The descriptive and multivariate analyses use these case weights to adjust for over-sampling by

strata, for the household selection probabilities by tract, for the tract-specific rates of over-sampling of households with children and for household non-response (Peterson et al., 2004).

Table 1. Descriptive data for routines, employment characteristics, family control variables, and maternal control variables (N=235)

	Mean/ Proportion	SD	Min.	Max.
<i>Dependent variables</i>				
Breakfast routine	64.5%	.041	0	1
Chore routine	62.5%	.042	0	1
Dinner routine	69.0%	.039	0	1
Bed routine	85.5%	.028	0	1
<i>Employment characteristics</i>				
Hourly wage	6.76	.099	1.25	9.20
Weekly work hours	34.11	1.128	2	70
Days at current job	817.32	104.271	13	9,053
Works >1 job	27.4%	.038	0	1
<i>Family control variables</i>				
<i>Household composition</i>				
Single-parent	46.4%	.043	0	1
Married	53.5%	.043	0	1
Number of children	2.48	.167	1	10
<i>Race/ethnicity</i>				
Latino	73.4%	.039	0	1
Other	26.6%	.039	0	1
<i>Maternal control variables</i>				
Age	34.35	.795	19	69
Education	10.58	.381	0	19

Note: Data are weighted to adjust for over-sampling by strata, for the household selection probabilities by tract, and for the tract-specific rates of over-sampling of households with children and of household non-response.

### *Descriptive Findings*

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics on the final sample of 235 low-wage mothers. In the table, we see that most low-income caregivers in this sample maintain breakfast (64.5%),

chore (62.5%), dinner (69.0%), and bed (85.5%) routines in their families. Overall, this sample seems to have many of the employment characteristics of the low-wage labor market that should influence their ability to maintain routines, including low wages and less than full-time employment. Specifically, the hourly wage of mothers is quite low (\$6.76/hour), compared to the average hourly wage in the United States, which was \$15.80 in 2001 (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002). The state-mandated minimum wage in 2001 was \$6.25 per hour. Mothers in the sample work around 34 hours per week, which is considered part-time by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics. In 2000, the average workweek in the United States for non-agricultural workers is 38.1 hours per week (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2002). However, caregivers in the sample have stable jobs, as the average length of time at their current job is 2.24 years. Additionally, few mothers (27.4%) work more than one job. In terms of family characteristics, a little over half of mothers in the sample are married (53.5%). The average number of children in the household is 2.48. As mentioned above, the sample for this study is predominantly Latino. Specifically, 73.4% of mothers in the sample reported being Latino. In terms of caregiver characteristics, the average age of mothers in the sample is around 34 years old and the mean level of education completed is less than high school (10.58 years).

### *Multivariate Models*

To examine the association between the maintenance of routines and employment characteristics, I run four logistic regression models, which are presented in Table 2 below. In these models, I regress each family routine (breakfast, chore, dinner, and bed) on the same set of employment, family, and maternal control characteristics. In all of the models, I control for the effects of family and maternal characteristics.

The results in Table 2 show that, overall, employment characteristics are not strongly related to the maintenance of routines in low-income families. The first model in Table 2 assesses the relationship between having a consistent breakfast routine and wages, work hours, employment stability, and working more than one job. In this model, employment characteristics,

Table 2. Binary logistic regression results examining the relationship between employment and family characteristics and the maintenance of routines among working caregivers (N=235, robust standard errors in parentheses)

	Breakfast	Chores	Dinner	Bedtime
<i>Employment characteristics</i>				
Wages	-.141 (.131)	-.257* (.151)	-.323** (.137)	-.462** (.199)
Weekly hours worked	.013 (.016)	.006 (.016)	-.024* (.014)	-.044** (.020)
Days at current job	.0003 (.0002)	.0003* (.0002)	.0003** (.0002)	.0002 (.0002)
Works >1 job	-.069 (.405)	.136 (.403)	.006 (.412)	-.256 (.529)
<i>Family controls</i>				
Married	.179 (.365)	.365 (.382)	.140 (.391)	.794 (.484)
Number of children	-.241** (.120)	.011 (.129)	.166 (.134)	.306 (.193)
Latino	-.773 (.534)	-.261 (.554)	-.893* (.524)	-.322 (.618)
<i>Maternal controls</i>				
Age	-.020 (.020)	.009 (.022)	-.026 (.021)	.007 (.023)
Education	.015 (.050)	-.013 (.061)	-.066 (.054)	-.039 (.058)
Constant	2.555* (1.530)	1.576 (1.781)	5.363** (1.563)	5.864** (2.025)
Wald $\chi^2$	9.94	6.64	15.25	21.01
p-value	.355	.674	.084	.013
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.054	.040	.075	.132

Note: Data are weighted to adjust for over-sampling by strata, for the household selection probabilities by tract, and for the tract-specific rates of over-sampling of households with children and of household non-response.

\*  $p < .10$

\*\*  $p < .05$

along with the control variables, only explain about 5% of the variance in having a breakfast routine. The same variables account for 4% of the variance in maintaining a chore routine,

7.5% of the variance in having a consistent dinner routine, and 13.2% of the variance in bedtime routines. The employment, family, and maternal characteristic variables only explain a significant percentage of the variance in the bedtime routine model. This means that the specified models for breakfast, chore, and dinner routines did not explain the dependent variables better than models without any predictor variables would.

Although the models predicting breakfast, chore, and dinner routines were not significant, examining the effects of employment characteristics across the models yields some interesting findings. Having higher wages decreased the odds of maintaining routines across all of the models, while job stability consistently increased the odds of having consistent routines. As seen in the fourth model, every dollar increase in hourly pay is associated with a .462 reduction in the log odds of maintaining a bedtime routine, after controlling for other variables in the model. Working more hours was not significantly related to maintaining breakfast and chore routines, but negatively associated with the nighttime routines of dinner and bedtime routines. Model 4 shows the log odds of having a bedtime routine increases by .04 points for every additional hour that mothers work. Last, the analysis reveals that caregivers with more than one job were not more likely to maintain any of the routines than caregivers with only one job.

## Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, I examine the association between work characteristics and the maintenance of routines in a sample of low-wage predominantly Latino mothers. One of the main findings of this study is that most low-wage caregivers in this study successfully maintain breakfast (64.5%), chore (62.5%), dinner (69.0%) and bedtime (85.5%) routines, regardless of work characteristics. Days at current job and working more than one job were not associated with any of the routines investigated. However, working more hours and hourly wages are negatively and significantly related to the maintenance of a bedtime routine. The finding that caregivers who work more hours are less able to maintain a bedtime routine for their family supports role strain theory. Additionally, mothers in prior

ethnographic studies state that they alter their families' sleep schedules in order to have family time together (Roy et al., 2004; Seefeldt, 2008; Tubbs et al., 2005). In her study of low-income families, Phillips (2002) also found that full-time workers were less able to maintain reading routines with their children than part-time workers.

The negative relationship between wages and the maintenance of routines is more surprising since the role enhancement perspective suggests that mothers with higher incomes are able to purchase goods and services that should help them keep consistent routines. One explanation for this finding may be that there are also other unmeasured work characteristics associated with higher wages that hinder routine maintenance. For example, nonstandard shifts are associated with higher wages (Kostiuk, 1990). Mothers working these shifts would earn more, but be less physically available to put their children to bed at the same time every night. This difference would not be reflected in other work characteristics included in the model, such as the number of hours worked. Additionally, jobs in which caregivers have more responsibilities may also pay more. These jobs would place more strain on caregivers seeking to balance work and family life. Indeed, many mothers in Kristin Seefeldt's (2008) study state that they passed up on higher paying jobs because they did not want to sacrifice time with their children. Both the timing of shifts and the responsibilities associated with employment are important variables that future studies should consider.

There are a number of study limitations that warrant discussion. First, the variables included in the regression analyses did not explain a lot of the variation in maintaining family routines. The bedtime routine model, which has the highest  $R^2$ , only had a score of .132. This means that many more factors need to be included in order to adequately explain the reasons that some families maintain routines and others do not. However, the fact that the work, family, and maternal characteristics previously found to influence feelings of role strain and parenting do not influence families' abilities to maintain routines is an important finding. Future studies should include other work characteristics to increase the ability to explain families' abilities to establish consistent routines, including



non-traditional hours and occupational prestige. Second, the generalizability of study results may be limited, given the fact that the sample is predominantly Latino and drawn from one specific geographic area. Since there are few studies to date examining the determinants of maintaining routines among Latino families (Loukas & Prelow, 2004), the study still makes an important contribution to the literature. Last, the cross-sectional nature of the study means that one cannot establish a causal relationship between the variables, but only discuss the association between them. Following families over time to see how their schedules change based on work characteristics will be an important topic for future researchers to explore.

The study finding that work characteristics are not significant determinants of family routines in this analysis may be interpreted as meaning that policymakers do not have to worry about improving the low-wage labor market for families. However, this interpretation ignores previous research showing that adverse work conditions can spill over into family life by increasing parental depression and anxiety, fostering parent-child conflict, and reducing parent acceptance of the child (Mcloyd, Toyokawa, & Kaplan, 2008, p. 2). The results of this study instead confirm ethnographic studies of low-income families showing that, despite facing significant barriers, parents find ways to carve out time to spend with their children. When work-family conflict becomes too great, parents act by sacrificing career advancement opportunities (Seefeldt, 2008) or by "endangering their own health through inadequate diet, sleep deprivation, and elevated depression and anxiety" (Tubbs et al., 2005, p. 88) to fulfill both roles. Policies should be crafted to support the high value that low-wage parents place on spending time with their families and to decrease the negative employment and mental health consequences related to doing so.

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